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The President's Daily Brief

23 April 1970

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Top Secret

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

23 April 1970

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Hanoi has now surfaced its plan for an all-Indochina political front. *(Page 1)*

In Cambodia, the Communists are maintaining their military pressure in widely separated areas of the eastern provinces. *(Page 2)*

A recent Communist directive in South Vietnam suggests that enemy forces will continue their recent pattern of activity, with emphasis on attempts to frustrate the allied pacification program. *(Page 4)*

The situation in Trinidad is discussed on *Page 5*.

In Colombia, the state of siege imposed Tuesday night has been successful in preventing major disorders. *(Page 6)*

[redacted] Soviet [redacted] *Page 7.* 50X1 50X1

There has been little change in the military situation in Laos. *(Page 7)*

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NORTH VIETNAM

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[redacted] Hanoi is working on a new political front embracing all Indochina. Politburo member Truong Chinh, in a speech on 21 April at the Lenin celebrations in Hanoi, surfaced the subject. He said the new front would include Viet Cong, Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese representatives, as well as followers of Sihanouk, and that one of its purposes would be to topple the Lon Nol government. 50X1

Truong Chinh said that at least initially the Communists intend to use the new front to promote their established policies for a political settlement in each of the three countries. He declared it would work in support of the political programs already tabled for each country by its pro-Communist faction--the ten points of the Viet Cong, the five points of the Lao Patriotic Front, and Sihanouk's five-point proclamation of 23 March.

A detailed platform for the front has not been announced, but it will certainly focus on a demand from all three groups for a total US disengagement from the entire Indochina area. Hanoi probably hopes to use the front to foster an impression of widespread opposition to US involvement in the area, and cover up its own involvement in Laos and Cambodia.

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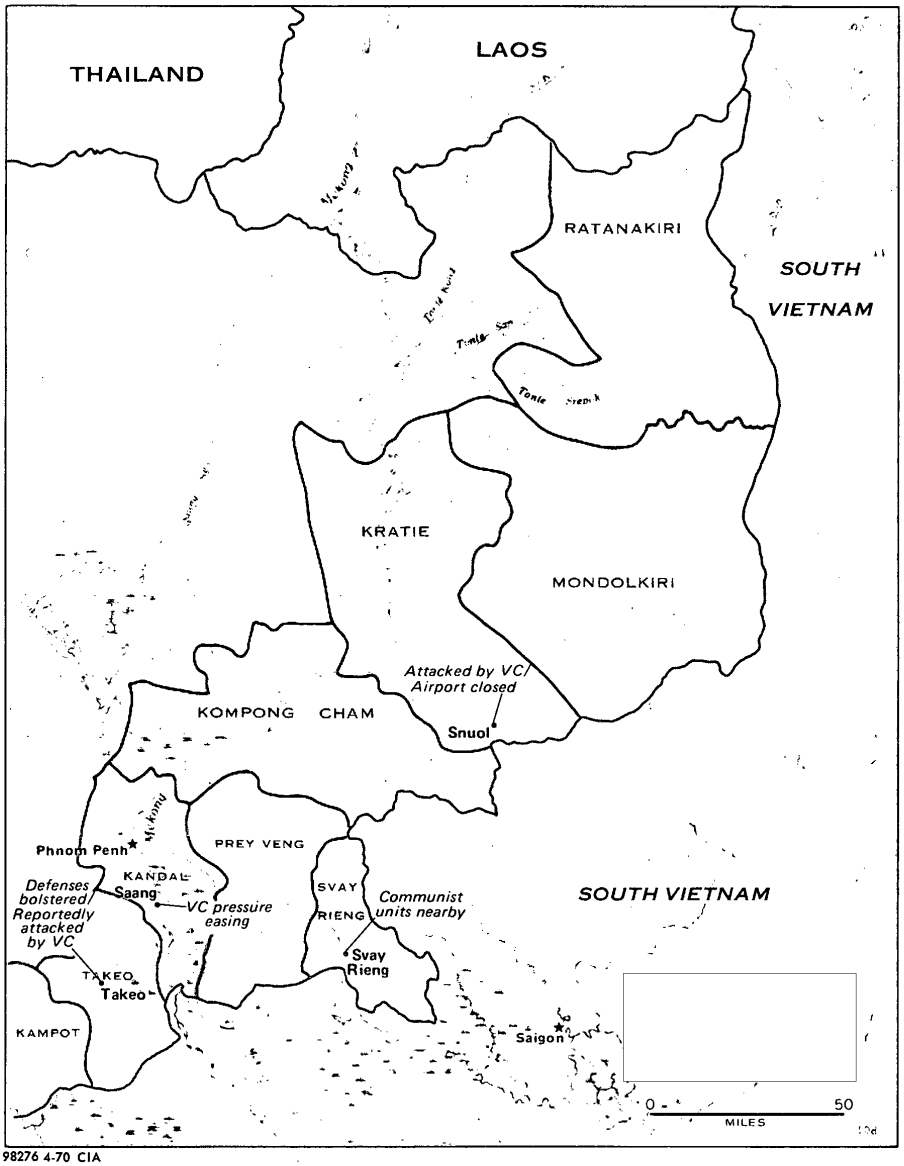
CAMBODIA: Current Situation



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CAMBODIA

Communist military pressure continues in widely separated areas. The garrison at the town of Snuol in Kratie Province was attacked by Viet Cong elements yesterday, according to an intercepted Cambodian message. This is the first direct attack on Snuol town, although the Communists have been closing roads into the area since last week.

A Cambodian Army spokesman claims there has been fresh action in the provincial capital of Takeo, which has been under periodic Communist harassment. Takeo's defenses have been strengthened by the arrival of some 1,000 ethnic Cambodian troops detached from the South Vietnamese Army. [redacted] 50X1

[redacted] 50X1

[redacted] 50X1

Viet Cong pressure near the river village of Saang south of Phnom Penh appeared to be easing yesterday. Government troops were advancing on the outskirts of the town, meeting little resistance from withdrawing Communist elements. Farther south, Communist reconnaissance units have been spotted near Svay Rieng town.

In a broadcast from Peking on 22 April, Sihanouk reiterated appeals to Cambodians to join his "people's struggle" and claimed that some local administrations already have been established in the countryside in the name of his "Government of National Union."

On 21 April Sihanouk broadcast a statement from Peking to the Cambodian people that he would soon convene a "congress" of his supporters as a necessary step before setting up his "government." He did not indicate where or when such a congress would be held.

The statement tends to confirm other signs that Sihanouk is having considerable difficulty finding enough supporters to establish a fairly respectable government-in-exile, and that he is having trouble keeping respected Cambodian figures in his entourage. The statement does demonstrate, however, that Sihanouk is not ready to

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throw in the towel. It also refers to a new communiqué that will be signed by Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian elements in several weeks. This probably will be related to the new Indochina front which Hanoi is forming.

* * *

Government leaders from non-Communist Asian countries are considering how they might best assist the Lon Nol government. [redacted] 50X1 50X1

[redacted] These countries appear anxious to explore all diplomatic and political approaches to the problem before they consider military assistance. 50X1

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SOUTH VIETNAM

There is further evidence that the Communists in South Vietnam see the frustration of the allied pacification program as a main task. A recently intercepted COSVN directive addressed to Communist commands in the III Corps region admits that the program is "decisively contesting" for the allegiance of the people and spells out the requirement to organize and mobilize the hamlets and villages. The directive stresses the need to involve the masses in a much broader insurgent movement. More conventional military activity is still important, COSVN says, but it should be used as an effective "lever" supporting the revolution and "not a substitute" for mass agitation and political action. The directive also calls, in pep talk fashion, for continuous pressure against the allies over the next several months--including some main force assaults--with a concurrent buildup of strength for future contingencies.

The latest COSVN directive, together with the pattern of recent enemy activity, suggests that the fundamental military line laid down by Defense Minister Giap and other North Vietnamese leaders last winter still holds and will continue to guide enemy actions during the summer months. Since late last year, Communist sappers, guerrillas, and artillerymen have made many attacks on government pacification forces, but most of the enemy's large units have avoided sustained combat. At the hamlet and village level, Communist political cadres and propagandists seem to have become more active in conjunction with the increased attacks.

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TRINIDAD

The government reports that about 30 mutinous army troops surrendered yesterday to loyalist forces; others, in still undetermined numbers, are holding out in the Teteron Bay area north of Port of Spain. The administration twice postponed meetings with the rebel faction in a play for time, but talks apparently got under way yesterday afternoon. A rebel spokesman indicated, without elaboration, that the mutineers had put forward certain proposals.

Small arms and ammunition purchased from the United States arrived in Trinidad last night. The government has requested aid from several Caribbean countries, and Venezuela is reported to have readied air force and navy units for possible assistance.

Port of Spain police were hard pressed at times yesterday to maintain control in the capital, as bands of looters and arsonists roamed the streets. Three persons were reported killed in the sporadic disorders, and a dusk-to-dawn curfew was again imposed last night. Labor strikes that had been threatened did not materialize, however.

Two US ships, including the helicopter carrier Guadalcanal, are scheduled to reach their holding positions off Trinidad early this morning; others in the group are to arrive late tonight. A British frigate was due in the area last night.

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COLOMBIA

The state of siege imposed Tuesday night is working. It has prevented major disorders, and the military appears to be in full control at present. [redacted] 50X1

[redacted] At last count Pastrana's lead was over 50,000 votes. 50X1

Rojas has considerable support among the lower ranks of the military, and it is possible that soldiers in the streets will refuse to obey orders to stop large-scale demonstrations for Rojas, especially if the use of weapons is required. Large-scale violence is not expected until after the announcement of final returns on Sunday.

Two Communist guerrilla attacks on army patrols in outlying areas earlier this week have further complicated the situation. [redacted] 50X1

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NOTES

USSR: [redacted]

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Laos: The military situation in the Long Tieng area remains quiet. To the north, enemy forces appear to be increasingly concerned over government efforts to push into their staging areas. They recently have mounted several unsuccessful attacks against such activity in the vicinity of the government base of Tha Tam Bleung.

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